

# Army detail deals with neighborhood woes

## Soldiers and Iraqis clean out Baghdad stadium while medics care for residents' dental problems

BY MARNI MCENTEE

*Stars and Stripes*

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Let the games begin.

That's the goal at Al-Kashafa soccer stadium in Baghdad, where 100 soldiers and as many Iraqi workers helped remove mounds of debris Sunday so the stadium can be used again.

The project, conceived by V Corps Commander Lt. Gen. William Wallace, is part of a citywide effort called Task Force Neighborhood.

The task force of military police, engineers, medics, dentists, and explosive ordnance experts targets an area each week and moves in to make things better.

"It's a catalyst for change in the neighborhood," said Capt. Alex Deraney, commander of the **535th Engineer Company from Grafenwöhr, Germany.**

The Al-Kashafa stadium was once home to a thriving soccer league. But three months before the war began, an Iraqi commando battalion turned the stadium into their headquarters, said Col. Will Grimsley, commander of the 3rd Infantry Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team.

The Iraqi troops dug foxholes behind the soccer dugouts and stored munitions on the stadium grounds. When U.S. troops arrived, the Iraqi soldiers left their uniforms behind and fled. Then, the looters had their way with the stadium, ripping up fences, tearing off doors and throwing trash everywhere, Grimsley said.

After a week of advance work to hire workers, get supplies and



**Col. Russell Czerw, commander of the 93rd Medical Battalion out of Heidelberg, Germany, tries to comfort a boy so he could receive treatment by Army dentists.**

organize U.S. soldiers' efforts, the fifth Task Force Neighborhood project began at the stadium on Sunday, Deraney said.

Workers began removing 180 tons of garbage from the stadium, Deraney said.

The project is a big departure from the work Deraney's company did during the war — building landing strips for unmanned aerial vehicles and C-130 Hercules cargo plans.

"It's rewarding, though," Deraney said.

Major cleanup was done Sunday, and contracts were settled for repainting bleachers, replacing glass in the press box and painting interior walls, Deraney said.

During the cleanup, dentists from the 561st Medical Company out of Vilseck, Germany, set up a mobile clinic just outside the stadium doors.

Iraqis, who get little dental care, waited in line for one of the two chairs, where the most common procedure was tooth extraction, said Capt. Kale Gray, company commander.

"Most of the patients come here with teeth decayed almost down to the gum," Gray said. "It's a good service we provide to get people out of their pain and discomfort."

With little to offer in return for the treatment, Iraqis from the neighborhood brought fresh oranges and watermelons for the soldiers.

On Sunday afternoon, the first game in the cleaned-up stadium was to be held — between soldiers and a local Iraqi soccer team.

"They'll kill us," Grimsley said.

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PHOTOS BY MARNI MCENTEE/Stars and Stripes

**Iraqi workers load debris onto an Army truck at the Al-Kashafa soccer stadium in Baghdad on Sunday. Army engineers and medics visited the stadium to help clean up and provide dental care.**